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101 *Note on the Khasis, Syntengs, and allied Tribes, inhabiting the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District in Assam.*—*By* MAJOR P. R. T. GURDON, *Superintendent of Ethnography in Assam.* (With plates III—IV).

[Read 3rd August, 1904.]

142 1. *Physical characteristics.*—The men are seldom tall; they are generally well made, and possess great strength of limb,—of leg in particular. Their features show a resemblance to those of the Japanese; their complexions are fair, noses flat, lips thick, and eyes very frequently obliquely set. The women are good-looking, of a buxom type, and are cheerful and pleasant-mannered. Children are sometimes [276] exceedingly pretty. Khasis are inveterate chewers of *pán*,—both men, [805] women, and children; the distances from place to place being measured [302] by the number of betel-nuts that can be chewed on the journey. The hair of the males is shaved above the forehead pretty high up, and the remainder is gathered into a knot at the back of the head. Very few 291 Khasis have much hair about the face. Both Khasis and Syntengs wear the sleeveless coat (*jymphong*) loin-cloth, *jain sliang* (a kind of

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291 small kilt), and a cap which is peaked in front and which comes down well over the ears, called (*ka tupia shkor*) ear cap. The dress of the Khasi females is somewhat different from that of the Synteng, the former wears a striped cloth tied round the waist, hanging down to the knees, and another cloth, with a fringed border, knotted on both the shoulders to cover the bust and a narrow cloth, called *ka jympien*, to serve the purpose of under-clothing. A cloth knotted in front is also worn like a cloak over shoulders. The Synteng woman wears a cloth smoothed round the body fastened above the bust and drooping down to the ankles. Another cloth is thrown over the shoulders, and crossed in front. Both Khasi and Synteng women wear a cloth tied over the head, called *ka tap mohkhlieh*. Up-to-date Khasi males wear knickerbockers, stockings, and boots, and females chemises. On festive occa-
292 sions, both Khasis and Syntengs, males and females, wear expensive silks, with earrings of gold or silver. There is a special dancing-dress of
301 elaborate pattern: The women at festivals wear a circlet of silver with a spear-head ornament behind, rising 4 or 5 inches from the back of the head. Large coral beads are much valued, and necklaces of alternate beads of coral and gold, and sometimes of coral alone, are worn by the chiefs and their principal followers. Such necklaces are worn by
262 women also on *gala* occasions. The staple diet of both Khasis and Syntengs is rice and dried fish. They are, however, fond of all kinds
[77] of meat, especially pork. Some of the Syntengs abstain from beef, owing no doubt to Hindu influences. Neither Khasis nor Syntengs eat dog, which is partaken of with zest by the Naga and the Garo tribes,—this is owing to the dog being considered by the Khasis to be the friend of man. Neither Khasis nor Syntengs use milk, the latter being thought by them to be an excrement. Neither Khasis nor Syntengs
411 tattoo. The weapons of both Khasis and Syntengs are bows and arrows, swords and shields. The national game of the Khasis is archery, regarding which a detailed description will be found in paragraph 10.

361 The people live in regular villages on fixed sites which have not changed for generations,—and they appear to be much attached to these sites, where, as a rule, the family tombs are standing. The houses are
342 built in the shape of a shell, the houses being divided into three compartments,—the *Shyngkup*, or porch, where odds and ends, and sometimes fowls, are kept; *nongpei*, or centre room, which is used for cooking and sitting in; and *rumpei*, or inner room, where the people sleep. The houses are low, with grass roofs reaching nearly to the ground, the beams are of hewn timber, the walls are of either planks roughly hewn or of reeds or split bamboos plastered with clay. The Khasis' houses generally have boarded floors raised some feet from the ground level,

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—the *Shyngkup*, or porch, being flush with the ground. The *nengpei*, or centre room, is approached by a flight of steps. There are no windows, except one, which is bored on one side to admit light and air,—this is called the *pongshai*. Both Khasis and Syntengs, like other Indo-Chinese races, are much addicted to gambling, and drinking to excess is a national vice. Christianity has, through the agency of the Welsh Calvinistic Mission, gained a very striking extension, and may be said indeed to be leavening the whole nation. Schools are numerous, and are pretty well attended by girls as well as boys. The Christians, and those who have come under the influence of Christianity, have adopted a high standard of comfort, and their houses resemble English cottages more nearly than the huts with which one is familiar in India.

*Agriculture.*—The Khasis do not use the plough; they cultivate their fields with a peculiar-shaped hoe, or *mohkhiew*. They cultivate rice in the valleys, the rice being sown broadcast and the fields irrigated often after considerable labour. They also cultivate hill rice on the uplands, which they sow broadcast. The potato, which was introduced into the Khasi Hills by Mr. David Scott about the year 1830,[1] is extensively cultivated and forms one of the principal articles of export. Job's-tears (*Coix lachryma*), several kinds of millet, Indian-corn, the *Sohphlang* (*Flemingia vestita*), are also largely cultivated. The valleys on the southern slopes of the hills have extensive orange groves, the oranges, especially those grown in the neighbourhood of Shella, being famous for their quality. The betel, vine, and areca nut are also largely grown on the southern side of the hills and in the low valleys, these plantations being irrigated by elaborate systems of aqueducts. The leaf of the bay tree (*Tatyrpad*) is collected, and is exported to the Sylhet plains. The Syntengs differ from the Khasis, in that they make use of the plough. Both Khasis and Syntengs are industrious cultivators, and they possess a certain rough and ready knowledge of the uses of manure. A more detailed description of agriculture in these hills will be given in the monograph.

[1] Khasi and Jaintia Hills Administration Report for 1875-76 by Colonel Bivar.

2. *Matriarchal customs and law of inheritance of property.*—The mother is the head of the house, and is both owner and the custodian of the family property as long as she lives. Males can own no property amongst either Khasis or Syntengs except self-acquired property. On the death of the mother, in the case of the Khasis, the family property passes to the youngest daughter. According to some authorities, however, the property would in practice be divided amongst all the surviving daughters. Failing daughters, the property passes to the youngest niece, and failing a niece, to the youngest female cousin. The same

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611 428 custom prevails amongst the Syntengs. Inheritance to the post of Siem (or chief) also passes through the female line, there being special customs of inheritance for each of the different chiefships.

3. The Khasis are divided into clans, or *kur*. These clans are 614 strictly exogamous. Some of these clans derive their names from animals, insects, trees or fish,—*e.g.*, the *tham* clan, *tham* meaning a crab; the *shrieh* clan, *shrieh* meaning a monkey; the *rani* clan, so called from a fish by name *rani*; the *diengdoh* clan, *diengdoh* meaning a certain tree. There are other instances also. In each instances, the clan is said to have sprung from the animal, fish, or tree, as the case may be. There thus appears to be a trace of totemism amongst the Khasis, although now-a-days their totems are not worshipped, nor do people abstain from killing, eating, or utilizing them. A man when he marries does not cease to belong to the *kur* or family of his mother, but his children belong to the *kur* of the man's wife. Frequently the husband merely visits his wife at her mother's house. It is seldom the case that a man takes his wife to his own house, certainly not until several children have been born.

As might be expected, owing to the influence of the marriarchate, 562 Khasi and Synteng women enjoy a much greater share of liberty than is usually the case with the sex. Although not wishing to make any general insinuations, there can be no doubt that Khasi women enjoy considerable freedom in their sexual relations. Women do all the trading, and like their Manipuri sisters make all the bazar purchases.

4. *Ancestor worship.*—The Khasis propitiate *Ka Iawbei*, the first 769 maternal ancestress of the clan, by sacrificing a pig; they also sacrifice yearly to *U Suidnia* (the departed maternal great-uncle). Also when a family is in trouble, *U Thawlang* (the departed great-grandfather) is propitiated. Ancestors are further worshipped by the erection of memorial stones. These memorial stones will be noticed separately.

5. *Birth customs.*—At the birth the navel of a child must not be 844 severed by any instrument made of iron or steel, but by a sharp splinter of bamboo. The placenta is placed in a pot and is kept inside the house till the ceremony of naming the child takes place. As long as the placenta remains in the house, the latter is *sang*, or taboo, to anyone except the members of the family. On the day of the ceremony of naming the child, the father removes the placenta and buries it outside the house. Having done this, the feet of the father are washed with water before he re-enters the house. When the ceremony takes place, powdered rice is placed on a sieve (*u prah*) and a small bow and three arrows, if the child is a male, and a *wait* (or *da*) and a star or (cane strap) (worn across the forehead when carrying a load by the Khasis), if the child is a female.

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child is a female. Up to the present time I have not discovered any trace of the *couvade.* [000 546]

6. *Marriage ceremony.*—Marriage is a purely civil contract. The most prominent features of the Khasi marriage are the following :— [581 585]

(*a*) The *pynhiar synjat*, or betrothal.

(*b*) The pouring out of libations of liquor to *Ka Iawbei* (the first maternal ancestress).

(*c*) The eating by bride and bridegroom out of the same plate.

(*d*) The mixing of liquor by the *ksiangs*, or go-betweens.

(*e*) The taking of the bride to the house of mother of the bridegroom, where a ring is placed on her finger by her mother-in-law.

7. *Divorce* can be easily obtained amongst the Khasis. Adultery, want of issue, and incompatibility of temper, are some of the more frequent causes. The usual ceremony of divorce is as follows:—The husband hands the wife five cowries, or pice. The wife hands these back to the husband, with five of her own. The man then either throws them away or hands them over to some village elder, who throws them away. Divorce is then complete. 586

8. *Death, ceremonies.*—The corpse is bathed and laid on its back. A fowl's egg (*ka'lengkypoh*) is then placed on the navel. A cock (*ka' iarkrad lynti*=the fowl that scratches the way) is sacrificed. The limbs of the fowl and its feathers are placed in a bamboo basket, which is hung up near the head of the corpse. Rich people sacrifice a cow also, called *ka masi pyrsum.* When a cow is sacrificed it is shot through the heart with an arrow. From the time of bathing the body till it is burned, offerings are offered daily; these offerings are called *ai ja miet ja step.* It is the custom amongst some to place the corpse in a long narrow box or coffin, which has been hollowed out of the trunk of a tree; this is called *ka shyngoid.* When this procedure is adopted, a small pig, which is killed by a spear (*u narsuh*) is sacrificed. This sacrifice takes place during the night. A goat (*U lang sait ksuid*=a goat to wash the devil)—which is believed to be a scapegoat to bear the sins of the deceased—is sacrificed. The corpse is then taken outside and placed on a bamboo bier (*ka krong*). When the *shyngoid* is used it is placed inside the bier. Some rice is scattered on the ground, and water is poured from a *lhota.* On arrival at the burning-place, the bier, with the corpse in it, is placed on the pyre, or *jingthang.* The egg placed on the navel is then broken on a plank and a fowl (*Ka iar padat*) is sacrificed. Two arrows are shot, one to the east and another to the west (this is a Khasi custom only); the arrows are intended for the protection of the spirit on its way to another world. Fire is then applied to the pyre. 764

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764 When the body has been burnt, the ashes and the uncalcined bones are collected by the relatives of the deceased and washed. They are then placed in a dish (*ka pliang*) which is taken to a stone repository for the bones (*mawshieng*); here a further sacrifice takes place. For three days after the burning, the maternal relatives frequent the *mawshieng*, where they offer articles of food for the spirit of the departed to eat, and then three eggs are broken (called *shat leng lait ia*) in order to ascertain what is the cause of death. Until this egg-breaking has taken place the family is taboo. The ashes and the uncalcined bones are subsequently removed from the *mawshieng*, and are placed in the family mausoleum, or *mawbah*. On this occasion a special ceremony takes place.

767 9. *Divination by breaking eggs.*—As this is a very peculiar custom, it deserves some description. Shadwell describes it as follows:—

[153] Each case of sickness or other calamity is attributed to the influence of some evil spirit, and the first step is to ascertain what particular spirit has been at work, and for this the great institution of egg-healing is brought into play. An expert (but not a professional) sits down before a board, in the centre of which he places an egg on a few grains of rice; after invoking the egg to speak the truth, he sweeps the rice off the board, excepting one grain left on any spot fancy dictates. Then naming a particular spirit, he asks that if he be the cause of evil, a part of the shell of the egg may be deposited near the grain of rice; he then strikes the egg sharply on the centre of the board. This process is repeated, if necessary, till the required information is obtained. The next thing is to discover what sort of offering will be acceptable to the spirit. This is ascertained in a precisely similar way, but the desired result is often not arrived at till much time and many eggs have been expended.

I have personally witnessed this egg-breaking and can vouch for the correctness of Mr. Shadwell's description. The Khasis do nothing of what they consider to be of the least importance without breaking eggs. When a Khasi builds a new house, or before he proceeds on a journey, he always breaks eggs to see whether the building or the journey will be lucky or not. I have quoted the description of egg-breaking at length, as I am informed that there is some similar custom extant in the Arracan Hill Tracts. I hope that it will be possible to ascertain whether or not there is any similar custom in Burma.

526 10. *Khasi archery*—Archery is a regular institution amongst the Khasis, who are very fond of it. Archery may be described as the Khasi national game. There are regular archery contests between the people of different villages, one village challenging another to shoot off a match. Certain conditions are fixed, such as the date and place of the match, the number of arrows to be shot by the archers, the distinguishing marks to be given to arrows of the two different sides, etc.,

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etc. The targets are of two kinds, i.e., *u skum*, which is made of a bundle of grass about 1 foot long and 4 inches in diameter, the target being fastened on to a pole; and from the root of a plant called *sohpdung*. The distance for the shooting is about 30 to 40 yards. 526

Before the shooting begins, a *nongknia*, or sacrificer, performs a *puja* and then the shooting commences. Each archer subscribes from half to one anna, the total amount so obtained is pooled and then wagered against a similar sum subscribed by the other side. Whilst the shooting is going on the men of both sides dance and sing, and when there is a hit a great shout, or *kynhoi*, is raised. The side that wins the match, after rewarding the *nongknia* and the man who makes the targets, buys a pig, and some liquor, which articles are partaken of by the people of the village which has won the match. In the War villages, and amongst the Syntengs, sometimes wagers of considerable sums are made in lump sums in these contests.

11. It is not intended to describe at great length the Khasi religious system, but only to note briefly regarding it at present, a full account being reserved for the monograph for the preparation of which I am collecting further information. Khasi religion is animism, or spirit worship. It may be divided into (*a*) the worship of spirits, (*b*) ancestor worship. 771

(*a*) *Spirit worship.*—The principal god amongst the Khasis is God the Creator (*U'lei Nongthaw*), who is sometimes masculine and sometimes feminine, the use of the feminine gender being no doubt due to matriarchal influence. A yearly sacrifice should be offered to this god of a cock and a goat. The cock is sacrificed as a substitute for man, it being thought that the cock, when killed, bears the sins of the man, and that by its sacrifice man will obtain redemption. How the cock came to occupy this important position in Khasi religion is not at present quite clear. Perhaps there were originally human sacrifices amongst the Khasis, and the cock nowadays takes the place of the human victim. Other gods which are worshipped are *Ka'lei long kur* (the goddess of the clan), *Ka'lei longspah* (the goddess of wealth), *U'lei um tong* (god of water). An important fact to be noted is that the Khasi gods or goddesses are never worshipped in the shape of idols in any form whatsoever. 776 782

(*b*) *Ancestor worship.*—I am inclined to think that this form of worship largely underlies the Khasi religious system. The following are some of the ancestors or ancestresses who are regularly worshipped:— 769

(1) *Ka Iawbei tymmen*,—the primeval ancestress of the family. A pig is sacrificed to her. 782

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769 (2) *U'snid' nia*, —or departed maternal great-uncle.
(3) *U thaw lang*, —or departed great-grandfather.

824 771 A very striking feature of the Khasi religion is the use of the leaves of the *dingsning* (*Q. lanceæfolia*) or Khasi oak tree. The leaves of this tree are used to cover the sacrifical knife, a sprig of the oak is implanted in the ground before the sacrifices of fowls or goats take place, an oak bough is hung up inside the house along with the jaw-bones and horns of sacrificed animals and the feathers of fowls. A great post of oak is to be found within the *arcana* of the sacred residence of the Siem priestess of Khyrim, the custodian of the religion of the State of that name. Another feature is the use of altars of stone on certain ceremonial occasions, and no Khasi religious ceremony takes place without the use of a small gourd *u klong* from which libation are poured out to the gods. Dancing always accompanies ceremonies of any importance, *e.g.*, funeral ceremonies, the erection of memorial stones, and the great *puja* of the Siems of Nongkrem.

769 764 211 12. *Memorial stones.*—These are without doubt the most prominent feature connected with these people. The first thing that strikes any visitor to the Khasi and Jaintia Hills is the immense number of these stones. The latter are placed in a line, a higher one in the centre, and lower ones on each side. The centre monolith is occasionally covered with a round flat stone. The upright stones are always in uneven numbers, being in sets of three, five, seven, or even nine stones. In front of each set of three stones is placed one horizontal stone, or cromlech which rests on three or four small upright stones, the horizontal stone being raised to about one foot from the ground. If five upright stones are erected, two horizontal stones are placed in front of them, and if seven are erected three, and so on. There can be no doubt that these stones possess considerable significance, but what exactly that significance is I am at present engaged in investigating. As far as my information extends at present, I give the following explanation.

Memorial stones may be divided for the present into two classes—

(*a*) Stones erected by the family, or *kur*, in accordance with the Khasi custom of ancestor worship.
(*b*) Stones which are erected by children in honour of a deceased parent.

It should be remarked that both classes of stones are merely cenotaphs, the mausoleums of the ancestors or the parents often being nowhere near the places where the memorial stones are erected. Taking class (*a*) first: Supposing that five upright stones are erected and two horizontal stones as depicted in plate III.1

1 [see end plate 1 - - - Analyst]

Stone No. 3 in the middle is called *U Maw Kni*, i.e., the stone of the maternal uncle, Nos. 2 and 4 are called *Ki pyrsa, Ki para*, i.e., the brothers or sisters, and the nephews or nieces. No. 1 is called *U Maw Ksing*, i.e., the stone of the drum, and No. 5 *U Maw kait*, the stone of the plantain. No. 6 is called *Ka Iawbei tynrai*. The word *tynrai* meaning root, *Ka Iawbei tynrai* signifies the first maternal grandmother of the family. The above is the system of naming stones in Maoshai Raj—other systems will be described in the monograph.

*Class* (*b*).—Stones of this class are generally, I am informed, three in number, consisting of three upright stones as shown in plate IV and a flat stone in front, as in the case of stones falling under class (*a*):

Here there is a marked difference in that the big stone in the middle is called *U Maw thawlong*, or the stone of the genera or father. Nos. 1 and 3 are the brothers or the male cousins of the father, and No. 4 is erected in honour of *Ka Iawbei*, or the grandmother of the father, —not the first ancestress of the clan as in the case in stones falling under class (*a*). The post split at its top containing the jawbone of a bullock which has been sacrificed in honour of the deceased parent should be observed, *vide* Fig. B. It was formerly the custom and is still in some places the custom, to spread offerings upon the flat stones to appease the spirits of the deceased ancestors. These stones, which are only 2 to 3 feet from the ground, suggest the idea of sacrificial tables at some time or other. Stones 3, 4, and 5 in Fig. A are between 9 and 10 feet high, but there are several larger *menhirs* in these hills.

The description of the stones in figures A and B was given me by a man of some intelligence at Nongkrem, but many different explanations of the names, and regarding the significance of these stones, are given by other persons living in various parts of the hills, and it is not unlikely that the account I have tentatively advanced may have to be modified subsequently. The system of each clan, apparently, varies to some extent from the other, and in some cases to a very considerable degree. In the Jaintia Hills very large groups of stones are found near villages, which are thought by the Syntengs to have been merely erected by the sides of roads as *Maw-shong-thait*, or seats for weary travellers, or for persons attending markets. At one place in the Jaintia Hills memorial stones were erected to commemorate a woman, *Ka Kumpatwat*, who in generations past is said to have had thirty husbands. It may, however, be stated that no such polyandrous custom has been found at the present day. The stones are reported to be thirty in number. There are also many stones at a place on the road from Shillong to Jowai said to have been erected to commemorate those who fell in a battle between the Syntengs and one of the Khasi Siems.

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764 As mentioned before, these stones are not gravestones, they are
769 shaped, both the vertical and the horizontal stones, remarkably like
211 the pictures of *menhirs* and *dolmens* that appear in Fergussons's work on rude stone monuments. It is a remarkable fact that Dalton mentions the existence of apparently very similar memorial stones in certain *Ho* and *Munda* villages in Chota Nagpur, and there is a drawing to be found at page 52 of Yule's Embassy to the Court of Ava of a cromlech which is apparently very like the cromlechs or *mawkynthei* to be met with every day in these hills. It is most unfortunate that the
[212] Khasis, owing to their want of a written language in former days, possess no written accounts of these stones, and that the Khasis of the present day are so very vague in their ideas about them, for I am inclined to believe that the proper elucidation of this question of memorial stones may prove to be the key to the origin of these people. I therefore strongly advise that a very careful search be made for similar stones, such as I have described, in other parts of India. It is possible that the Khasis may have found monoliths erected by some prehistoric race when they arrived in the Khasi Hills, and they may have adopted the custom of erecting memorial stones by the force of example, but the use of such stones seems to fit in with the Khasi system of ancestor worship, and it is remarkable that the shapes of the stones should be so very similar to those which exist in England, Ireland and Brittany, and I believe also in Denmark and Scandinavia. Is the custom of erecting such memorial stones in any way connected with people practising the matriarchate? The whole subject is a deeply interesting one, and I hope that it may be possible to throw some light on it.

784 13. *Taboo.*—The Khasis have an elaborate system of *sang*, or taboo. There are very many different kinds of *sang*, but some of them are the following:—

*Special taboo, at time of pregnancy.*—(*a*) It is *sang* for a pregnant woman to accompany a funeral procession.

(*b*) It is *sang* for a woman in the first stage of pregnancy to finish any sewing which she may have commenced before she became *enceinte*. There is a similar prohibition regarding the finishing of the plaiting of wicker baskets.

(*c*) It is *sang* for the husband of a pregnant woman to thatch the ridge of the roof of a house at such a time.

(*d*) It is *sang* under similar circumstances to fix an axe or a *dao* in a handle.

*Ordinary taboos.*—(i) It is *sang* to build a house with stone walls on all four sides.

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(ii) It is *sang* to use nails in fixing the timber of a house. 784

(iii) The *dypei*, or hearth, should be made of one kind of timber only.

(iv) To build a house with resinous timber (*'seh khlein*). Only the Siem's family can use such timber.

(v) To cut trees from the sacred forest.

(vi) To take or give anything with the left hand.

(vii) To step over the body of any person.

(viii) To kill a fowl or a goat without throwing first rice over the body of the victim.

(ix) To drink the milk of a cow or goat.

(x) To talk with any one, except with those who are working together, when the thrashing of paddy is going on.

(xi) Not to give fire or water when anyone demands the same.

(xii) A twin birth is *sang*. It is a more serious matter even than *sang* if the twins are of opposite sexes.

There are rules of *sang* regarding marriages within prohibited degrees of relationship, and there is a very stringent rule of *sang* against marrying within the *kur*, or clan. Those who do this are excommunicated and their bones or ashes are not allowed to be placed in the family mausoleum. To marry within the same *kur*, or clan, is the greatest crime a Khasi can commit. 784 582

There are special rules of *sang* affecting certain families, *e.g.*, for the clan *Nongtathiang* to eat a certain kind of lemon, for the clan *Kharumnuid* to eat pork, for the Cherra Siem's family to eat dry fish, for the family of the Siem of Mylliem to eat the pumpkin. Possibly, these taboos may be relics of totemism in these families. 784 614

14. *The Thlen superstition.*—The following succinct account of this interesting superstition appeared on page 254, paragraph 20, of the *Assam Gazette* of the 5th August 1882. I do not think I can do better than repeat it here: "The tradition is that there was once in a cave near Cherrapunji a gigantic snake, or *Thlen*, who committed great havoc among men and animals. At last one man, bolder than his fellows, took with him a herd of goats and set himself down by the cave and offered them one by one to the *Thlen*. By degrees the monster became friendly, and learnt to open his mouth at a word from the man, to receive the lump of flesh which was then thrown in. When confidence was thoroughly established, the man heated a lump of iron red hot in a furnace, induced the snake at the usual signal, to open his mouth, and then threw in the red hot lump, and so killed him. He then cut up the body and sent pieces in every direction, with orders that the people were to eat them. Wherever the order was 773

773 obeyed, the country became free of the *Thlen*: but one small piece remained which no one would eat, and from this sprang a multitude of *Thlens*, which infest the residents of Cherra and its neighbourhood. When a *Thlen* takes up its abode in a family there is no means of getting rid of it, though it occasionally leaves of its own accord, and often follows property of the family when given away or sold. The *Thlen* attaches itself to wealth, and brings prosperity and wealth to the family, but on the condition that it is supplied with blood. Its craving comes on at uncertain intervals: and manifests itself by sickness among the family, by misadventure, or increasing poverty. It can only be appeased by the murder of a human being. The murderer takes the hair, the tips of the fingers, and a little blood from the nostril, caught in a bamboo tube, and offers these to the *Thlen*. The belief is that the demon then appears in the form of a snake and devours the body of the murdered person, which is materialised from the portions thus offered. After this, its craving is satisfied for a time, and the affairs of that house prosper. Many families in these hills are known or suspected to be *Ri-thlen*, or keepers of a *Thlen*, and are dreaded and avoided in consequence. Whenever a dead body is found with the marks above described on it (and particularly if it is with no wound, and death has been caused by twisting the neck), it may be presumed with almost absolute certainty that the object of the murder was to appease a *Thlen*."

[171] It may be stated that, as far as I am aware in Assam, this superstition is peculiar to the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, and it is not to be met with amongst any of the other hill-tribes of the province. It would be specially interesting to learn whether there are any traces of a similar superstition amongst any of the tribes of Burma and Further India. The *Thlen* superstition is probably of a very ancient origin. It may be said to take the place amongst the Khasis of the head-hunting custom amongst the Nagas. The *Thlen* superstition is still deep-rooted amongst the people here, in many portions of the country the Khasis being afraid to walk out after dark for fear of being attacked by *sumpohbacks*, or persons who are searching for victims to sacrifice to the *Thlen*.

805 15. *Calculation of time.*—The Khasis adopt the lunar month. The names of the lunar months have been extracted from Colonel Bivar's report below. I am not certain whether all Colonel Bivar's explanations of meanings of the names of the months are correct:

*U Kylla-lyn-kot*,—the wood-burning moon, corresponding with January.

*U Rympang*,—the windy moon, corresponding with February.

*U Lyber*,—the seed-sowing moon, corresponding with March.

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*U Iaiong*,—the cloudy changeable-weather moon, corresponding with April. 805

*U Jim-mang*,—the flowering moon, corresponding with May.

*U Jú-la*,—the deep-water moon, corresponding with June.

*U Naitung*,—the bad-smelling moon, corresponding with July.

*N Nailar*,—the moon when a plant called the *Jatalar*, which has a red flower flourishes. This is perhaps one of the *arums*. The plant is commonly known as the snake plant.

*U Nailar*,—the moon for ploughing, corresponding with September. This may be also the month for courting, the word *lar* also having the meaning to woo.

*U Ry-aw*,—the moon when nature fades (usually becomes red) corresponding with October.

*U Naiwing*,—the earthen-pot moon, corresponding with November.

*U Nohprah*,—the moon of the fall of the leaf, corresponding with December.

The Khasi week consists generally of eight days, although in some of the *War* villages on the southern side of the hills there is a week of four days only. The days of the week are named after the markets which are held in rotation on the different days.

| *Khasi.* | *Synteng.* |
|---|---|
| 1. Lynkah. | Ky-lao. |
| 2. Nongkrem. | Pyn-sing. |
| 3. Um-long. | Mao-long. |
| 4. Rang-hep. | 'Iao-siang. |
| 5. Shillong. | Maoshai. |
| 6. Pomtih. | Pyukat. |
| 7. Um-nih. | Thym-blein. |
| 8. Teo-duh. | Ka-hat. |

16. *Tekaonomy*.—One more interesting custom that may be noticed 551
is the Khasi and Synteng custom of *tekaonomy*, or of parents taking the names of their children, *e.g.*, ka Kmi Ka Nari (the mother of Ka Nari), U Kpa Nihon (the father of Nihon). The taking of names thus is almost universally practiced. The actual names of the parents after falling into desuetude are often completely forgotten by the villagers. Only the names of the children are used coupled with "father of" "mother of" as explained above. The advent of the Welsh Missionaries and the partial dissemination of English education has, in some cases, produced some rather peculiar names. I quote some instances:— [697]
U Water Kingdom, Ka Mediterranean Sea, Ka Red Sea, U Shakewell Bones, U Overland, Ka Brindisi.

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193 *A brief note on the Khasi language.*—It is not intended here to give a description of other than what occur to me to be same of the more prominent characteristics of the language.

*The articles.*—There are four articles in Khasi; three in the singular, *u* (masculine), *ka* (feminine), and *i* (diminutive of both genders), and one in the plural for both genders, *ki*.

All Khasi nouns take the article as in French—the great majority of inanimate nouns are feminine and all abstract nouns. The sun (day), *ka sngi*, is feminine, the moon (month), *u b'nai*, is masculine. Sometimes the word varies in meaning according to the gender: *u ngap*, a bee : *ka ngap*, honey.

*Genders.*—Names of mountains, stones, plants, fruits, stars, the moon are masculine, *e.g.*:—

*U kyllong*, the Kyllang rock.
*U maulein*, quartz.
*U phan*, potato.
*U soh siamtra*, orange.
*U 'lar shai*, the morning star.
*U 'tiw kulap*, rose.
*U b'nai*, the moon.

Names of rivers, lakes, books, places, the sun, and all abstract nouns are feminine, *e.g.* :—

*Ka wah*, river.
*Ka nar*, lake.
*Ka kitap*, book.
*Ka Shillong*, Shillong.
*Ka sngi*, sun.
*Ka jingmeng*, advice.

The article *i* is used either as a dimunitive, as *i khunlung*, a baby, or for denoting endearment, as *i mei*, mother.

*Number*—*u*, *ka* and *i* stand for the singular number. *Ki* is the sign of the pural, e.g, *u khla* (a tiger), *ka khoh* (a Khasi basket), *i khun* (a child). *Ki* is the sign of the plural, as *ki maw*, the stones. *Ki* in some few instances is used honorifically, as *ki Siem*, the king, *ki khaw*, the father-in law.

*Cases* are eight in number, and are denoted by prefixes—the declension of the noun *lum* (hill) is given below by way of example:—

| | *Singular.* | *Plural.* |
|---|---|---|
| Nominative | *u* lum | *ki* lum |
| Accusative | *ia u* lum | *ia* ki lum |
| Instrumental | *da u* lum | *da* ki lum |

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| | *Singular.* | *Plural.* |
|---|---|---|
| Dative | *ia, ka, or cha u lam* | *ia ka or cha ki lam* |
| Ablative | *na u lam* | *na ki lam* |
| Genitive | *jong u lam* | *jong ki lam* |
| Locative | *ka u lam* | *ka ki lam* |
| Vocative | *o lam* | *o phi ki lam* |

The sign of the genitive case *jong* is sometimes omitted for the sake of brevity, e.g., *u kmie ngu* (*my* dog) for *u kmie jong ngu*. The preposition *la* gives also the force of the possessive case, e.g., *la ka jong ka jong* (their own). There are some nouns which change their form, or rather are abbreviated, when used in the vocative case, e.g., *ka mei*, not *ka kmie*, = Oh! mother; *ka pa*, not *ka kpa* = Oh! father. These, however, are all of them nouns showing relationships.

*Pronouns.*—Personal pronouns are *ngu* (I), *ngi* (we), *nu* (thou, masculine), *phu* (thou, feminine), *u* (he, it), *ka* (she, it) a diminutive form of *u* or *ka*, and *ki* (they).

The emphatic form of the personal pronoun is formed by prefixing *me*, e.g., *mengu*, *me-u* after a verb, but not after a preposition, e.g., *dei me-ngu* = it is I. But *ai ia me-ngu* is an incorrect form.

The *Reflexive Pronoun* is formed by the word *kade* (self) being suffixed to the personal pronouns,—*as u ieh emie ia kade* = he does himself harm, or by the addition of the word *ki* (self) to the personal pronoun,—*as phi ki phi eng* (you yourself).

The *Relative Pronoun* is formed by the suffixes *ba, ai, ne, ta*, added to any of the personal pronouns,—*as kaba, uba; kaba* (who, which) *kani, uni, kini* (who, what), *kana, una, kine* (what, who), *kata, uta, kita* [that, what].

The *Demonstrative Pronoun* is formed by the addition of the particles denoting the position of things with reference to the speaker, *e.g.*, (1) near = this, *ne* (*u-ne*) *kane, i-ne, ki-ne*; [2] in sight, but further off = that, *te* (*ute*, etc.); (3) further away, but still visible = that, *tai* [*u-tai*, etc.]; [4] out of sight, or only contemplated in the mind = that, *to* [*u-to* etc.]; [5] above = that, *ati* [*u-ti*, etc.]; [6] below = this, *thi* [*ka-thi*, etc].

The *Interrogative Pronoun* is the article followed by *ne* or *ki* (*e.g.*, *u-ne, kane*, who), *u-ai ka-ai* (who, which).

*Adjectives* are formed by prefixing *ka* to the root, thus *kha* goodness; *ka-kha* good, *ewie kaiane*; *ka-ewie* bad. When *ka* is dropped, the word is no longer an adjective but a verb, and in some cases a noun, *e.g.*, *shu khrew* [adj.] = big, great; *u khrew* = he becomes great. *An* adjective may be formed without any of the prefixes *ka, shu*, etc.,—*e.g.*, *ka mieu-tuh* = a thieving cat.

An adjective follows the noun it qualifies, and agrees with the noun
193 it qualifies in gender and number.

*Comparison.*—The Comparative is formed by adding *khaw* before an adjective, followed by *ban* in [than], or simply *ia*; and the superlative by adding such adverbs of intensity, as *ban ah, ah thar, tam, ah, shibuddei*, which are followed generally by *ia* or *ban ia*.

*Numerals.*—In Khasi the cardinal number always precedes the noun
[xx] (e.g., *ki sin*, three times). The following are the first ten numerals:—

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Wai | 6. Khoria. |
| 2. Ar. | 7. Khnieng. |
| 3. Lai. | 8. Phra. |
| 4. San. | 9. Khyndai. |
| 5. Sam. | 10. Shiphew. |

The word *khat* is prefixed for forming the numerals from 11 to 19, e.g., *khat-ani, khat-ar*, eleven, twelve, etc.

*Verbs.*—The verbal root [which never varies] may be simple or compound. The compound roots are [1] *causals* formed by prefixing *pyn, pyl, kyn* to the simple root; *frequentatives* formed by prefixing *sang* [going on], *dang* still, *ioi*, *ia* [continues to]; *negatives* formed by prefixing *wan*.

*Inflexions* are formed by prefixing *ia*. There is only one form of conjugation for all verbs. Tense and mood are indicated by prefixes, number and person by the subject. When the subject is a noun, the pronoun is inserted before the verb. The following is the conjugation of the verb "to be" in the present, past, and future tenses:

| Present. | | Past. | | Future. | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Singular. | Plural. | Singular. | Plural. | Singular. | Plural. |
| I | We | We | We | We | We |
| Ngan long, I am. | Kyn long, we are. | Ngan ia long, I was. | Kyn ia long, we were. | Ngana long, I shall be. | Kynta long, we shall be. |
| Ka (noun) or phin (thou) long, thou art. | Phi long, ye are. | Ka or phin ia long, thou wast. | Phi ia long, ye were. | Nana or phina long, thou shalt be. | Phina long, ye shall be. |
| U (noun) or ha (he) long, he or she is. | Ki long, they are. | U or ia ia long, he or she was. | Ki ia long, they were. | U'a or ha'a long, he or she will be. | Kina long, they will be. |

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The other simple tenses are made definite or emphatic by various means. *Ia*, sign of the past, when added to *ioh*, sign of the potential has the sense of the pluperfect, e.g., *nga ia ioh ïong*, I had been. To abbreviated into 'o emphasises the future, the particle *na* also indicates the future, *da* is the usual sign of the subjunctive mood, *lada*, *la*, *lynda*, and *pada*, how *da* are other signs of this mood. The sign of the infinitive is *ka'o*. The imperative is either (1) the simple root, or (2) the root compounded with some word such as *to*.

*Participles*.—The present participle is formed by prefixing *la* to the root, e.g., *la ïong*, living. The imperfect participle is formed by prefixing such words as *ha*, *ba*, *da*, *da lada*, etc. The perfect participle is formed by putting such particles as *ia*, *ia*, *lada* [illegible], *da lada* before the verb. Verbal nouns of agency are formed by adding *sang* to the root, e.g., *u sang kaia* (the murderer).

The *Passive Voice* is formed by using the verb impersonally and putting the subject into the Accusative case with *ia*.

*Potentiality* is indicated by the verb *ioh*, necessity by the verb *don*; *dang* and *da* show the infinitive present.

The negative is indicated by the particles 'ym contracted into 'm *shym* and *put*. 'Ym is put before the verb,—e.g., *'ym don bruar u thaw* is no one; with a pronoun it is contracted, e.g., *u'm wan*, he does not come. It follows the sign of the future, e.g., *phi'n y'm wan*, you will not come. *Shym* and *put* are negative particles, and with negative verbs in the past tense,—e.g., *u'm shym la wan*, he did not come.

*The use of the word "jing"*.—One of the most striking features of the language is the use of the word *jing*, which is employed to create an abstract noun out of a verb. For instance, take the verb *hun*, to eat; if we prefix *jing* we have *jinghun* = food. *Sat* to hold, *jing-sat*, a handle. The use of the word *sang* has already been noticed under the heading "verbs." For example of another common prefix, it may again be mentioned here. Thus, *sang-ai-jinghun* means a table-servant, literally *one who gives food*. Again *sang-sat*, a holder, literally *one who holds*.

*Syntax*.—The order of words in the sentence is usually (1) subject, (2) verb, and (3) object, in fact, the same as in English, and in this respect it differs entirely from the order in the languages derived from Sanscrit, and that of the languages of the Tibeto-Burman group so far as I have been able to ascertain. For instance, in the Kachari or Bora language the order in the sentence is (1) subject, (3) object, (2) verb. In Khasi when emphasis is needed, however, the object occasionally precedes the verb, e.g., *ka u sah u la die*, he has sold the fruit, literally the fruit he has sold. As stated before, adjectives follow the nouns they qualify, e.g., *u lum lyngnong*, a high mountain, literally, the hill that is

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193 high. Interrogative adverbs may either precede or follow the verb, *e.g.* *nangi phi wan or phi wan nangi*, where do you come from.[1]

121 18. *Conclusion.*—I have endeavoured to note down briefly above some of what seem to be the more prominent features of Khasi Ethnology, reserving a more detailed account of the Khasis for the monograph which is under preparation. In publishing this brief account, it is my hope that it may attract criticism by persons who are more familiar with the Khasis than myself, and it is my earnest desire that if experts who are acquainted with the Ethnology of the province of Burma and of that great country comprising the valleys of the Mekong and the Menam, find any points of resemblance between Khasi Ethnology and that of those regions, they will kindly bring those points to my notice, so that perhaps a clue may be found to the origin of the Khasis, which is at present so obscure.

13 [1] In the compilation of this brief notice of the Khasi language, I beg to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Grierson's Skeleton Khasi Grammar, the Revd. H. Roberts's Khasi Grammar, and to Nimar Singh's "Hints on the Study of the Khasi language."—P. R. T. G.

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[End plate 2]